

Recenzja rozprawy doktorskiej mgr Magdaleny Trinder

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE LEVEL OF EXTROVERSION, LOCUS OF CONTROL AND GENDER ON LISTENING AND READING PROFICIENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

It seems that in the background of the present dissertation, there is an idea to investigate the reasons why some people are more successful in learning a foreign language than others. Although the effort to study individual learner differences is not new, every contribution deserves appreciation, particularly with regard to the fact that every study focuses on different variables and on different target groups. As far as this project is concerned, it offers an added value by the method used by its author. All gathered data and observations are regularly confronted with the findings of other researchers that makes an overall picture even more complete and convincing. From this point of view, the submitted dissertation may be perceived as a significant contribution to the continued search for an increase in the efficiency of the foreign language teaching-learning process.

The ambition of this project's author is to investigate whether three carefully selected variables have impact on the levels of proficiency of higher education students and how they relate to each other. The variables chosen for investigation are gender, level of extroversion and locus of control (LOC). In this respect this study is unique and original, especially with regard to LOC. Clearly stated hypotheses and research questions are subject of examination through investigating two primary language skills, namely reading and listening comprehension.

The structure of the text corresponds with the set objectives and the headings of individual subchapters respect a logical progression going from general to more specific. The text is presented with considerable precision in formulating ideas, either referred to other sources or those of the author. Every section of the text is introduced with clearly formulated goals and ended with summarizing ideas.

Starting from the taxonomy used throughout the work presented in *Chapter 1*, the reader is introduced to the relevant context by looking at the developments in the field of *second language acquisition*, and analyzing the terms *gender*, *extroversion* and *locus of control*. The next subchapters devoted to language acquisition and theories of SLA are

elaborated very precisely and extensively referring to a great number of sources. This range of information, however, is at the expense of readability and lucidity and it makes an impression of a summary of a larger analytical work. With regard to the amount of information presented, this part of the text requires from the reader adequate concentration.

More to the point is *Chapter 2* dealing with the individual factors influencing SLA, although the scope of the section includes the areas which are not directly related to the present study. This, however, is done on purpose with regard to *the complex nature of these interrelated influences* (p.34). The author starts with learners' social backgrounds that undoubtedly may influence their foreign language outcomes in addition to the traditionally mentioned cross-linguistic influences. This subsection is followed by an extensive examination of psychological, cognitive and psychical influences. Here the author again documents her admirable deep knowledge of the research outcomes in such areas as *motivation, attitude, anxiety, risk-taking, self-efficacy, locus of control and personality*. Various authors are quoted, their views reconsidered and the reader thus receives a useful overview of the developments and trends in the respective areas. All the information presented in the given chapter indicates that the author of this dissertation is more than well oriented in the subject matter and has an ability to draw inescapable conclusions from her study.

Chapter 3 constitutes the core of the project as it outlines the results of the author's empirical study carried out on a group of university students of English. The chapter starts with theoretical assumptions followed by research questions and hypotheses. The author's intention is to find out if there is a significant difference in performance between introverts and extroverts in reading and listening comprehension exercises, while the issues of gender and the orientation of locus of control are the mediating variables. The main and also specific questions are the basis for the formulation of hypotheses.

The following description of the research methodology meets the highest possible standards. Every detail of the project is carefully thought-out, including the selection of project participants and research instruments, and the procedure used. The selected instrumentarium and the statistical methodology as well as the procedure (consisting of the quantitative and qualitative analyses) guarantee that the research results may be accepted without reservations. To make the results of the analysis even more valid, the author decided to carry out well-structured interviews with 15 selected project participants.

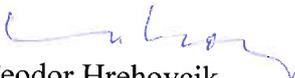
The conclusions drawn from the study are somewhat surprising as all the three hypotheses proposed at the beginning of the project have been disapproved. They indicate that

there are no differences in achievement between males and females (at least as far as the English philology students are concerned); the performance of individual learners at the highest level is not influenced by level of extroversion or locus of control; or that the people who have some teaching experience with English have higher scores than those who do not have. Many other observations and findings are presented in the present work as well as hints for further research. In this context the following question may be addressed to the dissertation author. Is it possible to identify any findings that may be applied to other less homogeneous groups of English language learners?

On the whole, the author of this dissertation has gathered and presented a lot of valuable information on the many aspects of learner differences; she developed and tested a well-elaborated method of investigating the factors that could have influence on the proficiency level of the target group learners of English. An extensive and deep analytic study of numerous relevant sources, which preceded the proper design and application, is a proof that the present project is an important contribution to the current state of affairs. The results obtained may be beneficial for SLA specialists and for all those who intend to carry out further research in the given area.

Concluding comments: The doctoral dissertation of mgr Magda Trinder is undoubtedly a well-written text documenting its author's expertise and a very conscientious approach to research work. The objectives stated in the introduction have been met satisfactorily and with a high degree of professionalism. The material presented may serve as a point of departure for further research and new ambitious projects.

I have no hesitation to accept it as a doctoral dissertation and to recommend it for the final procedure. I suggest to grant a distinction for the submitted work.


Teodor Hrehovcik